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SURVEY OF AGRICULTURAL LABOR CONDITIONS IN LIVINGSTON COUNTY, ILLINOIS

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and
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This publication is one of a series of 11 with similar titles by Tom Vasey and Josiah C. Folsom. The reports are based on surveys made in the late summer and early autumn of 1936 of the economic and social conditions of adult agricultural laborers. The counties studied represent various types of farming in different parts of the United States, as follows:

<u>State</u>	<u>County</u>	<u>Type of Farming</u>
California	Placer	Fruit
Colorado	Archuleta	Stock-ranch
Illinois	Livingston	Corn
Iowa	Hamilton	Corn-Hog
Kansas	Pawnee	Winter wheat
Kentucky	Todd	Tobacco
Louisiana	Concordia Parish	Cotton (eastern)
Minnesota	Lac qui Parle	Small grain
Pennsylvania	Wayne	Dairy
Tennessee	Fentress	Self-sufficing
Texas	Karnes	Cotton (western)

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SURVEY OF AGRICULTURAL LABOR CONDITIONS IN LIVINGSTON COUNTY, ILLINOIS

By Tom Vasey, Farm Security Administration

and

Josiah C. Folsom, Bureau of Agricultural Economics

During the summer and fall of 1936, the Bureau of Agricultural Economics made studies of wages and working conditions affecting farm laborers in Livingston County, Illinois, and in 10 other counties in as many States. The funds necessary for this research were provided by the Works Progress Administration.

Enumerators were engaged to canvass hired farm laborers and their employers, and schedules were used to record the information secured from each group. The schedule designed for laborers was rather complete, covering, in addition to age, education, and other such personal characteristics, job descriptions, wage rates, work histories for the preceding 12 months, and participation in community affairs. Farm operators were questioned concerning wage rates, fluctuations in numbers of employees, and methods of obtaining labor. /1

The enumerators were directed to use the limited time available for reaching as nearly as possible all the farms in the county hiring labor, except those that are not primarily dependent on agriculture as a source of income. The exceptions included country estates, livestock dealers, institutions, feed lots, boarding and lodging places, and unclassified farms. As to the laborers, the enumerators were instructed to interview "only those hired to do the work of adults at adult wages." This eliminated all unpaid family labor and any child labor receiving wage rates below those of adults. "Hired labor" or "employees" as the terms are used in this study refer to persons who work for wages and are dependent on wages paid by the farm operator. The amount of these wages does not depend on the income derived from the crop. The status of the operator, whether renter or owner, was not considered.

Livingston County, Illinois, lies well within that part of the Corn Belt where the emphasis is on production of corn for sale rather than for feed on the farm. Its heaviest labor demands come during the seasons of planting, cultivating, and harvesting. Frequently the busiest times are in the spring when, due to irregular weather conditions, the laborers must take advantage of fair days for plowing and planting.

/1 The work was directed by representatives of the Department of Agriculture. Members of the faculty of the University of Illinois cooperated in securing the enumerators, E. H. Whiteside of Paris and Ralph Peverley of Decatur, and in selecting the locality to be surveyed.

At the time of year when this survey was conducted, September 17 to October 17, haying, threshing, and silo-filling had been largely completed; thus most of the harvest work except corn husking was finished. Until recent years laborers were kept straight through the crop season, but now it has become a practice to lay off men at this time and reemploy them later for corn husking. The reasons for this change were not ascertained, but they may lie either in the fact that relationships between employer and employee appear to be less personal than was formerly the case, or in the necessity for cutting labor costs. Because of these lay-offs, the time of the survey probably represents, except for the winter months, the period of least employment in this section.

The enumerators visited 1,287 of the 3,575 farms reported in Livingston County by the 1935 Census. As these were scattered throughout the county, information was also obtained from neighbors concerning many other farms. Of those actually visited, 1,018 were hiring no laborers at the time; 40 others were, but for various reasons schedules were not obtainable; and on 8, the operators could not be interviewed. On the remaining 221 farms, 264 laborers were employed. The data presented here are compiled from the schedules taken from 261 of those laborers and their employers.

General Characteristics

The laborers on the farms of Livingston County at this time of year were predominantly young men. The majority were under 30 years of age and three-fourths were under 40. Not a few were in their teens -- farmers' sons working out for wages. Those interviewed represented a relatively well-schooled rural group. Although more than three-fourths had completed the eighth grade, only one-fourth of the total number had gone beyond this point. The older men had not obtained as much schooling; 30 percent of those 30 years old or over had failed to complete the eighth grade; but only 12 percent of those 29 or under had not finished grammar school. Similarly, the proportion who had had a year or more of high school was much greater among those who were less than 30 years old than among those who were over 30 (Table 1).

Unmarried men formed more than half the group. Two-fifths of the entire sample were single and under 30 years of age. A greater number of the older men were married than were single, but two-thirds of the married workers were under 40. Few were reported as separated or divorced (Table 2).

As would be expected with the large percentage of unmarried individuals, a majority of the laborers, 55 percent, reported no dependents (Table 3). Of those reported, almost without exception, all were wives or children of the workers. More than one-half of the family units were made up of 4 or more persons, and one family of 14 was found. The most frequently reported family unit included 3 persons -- the laborer, his wife, and one child.

Table 1.- Age and education of 231 agricultural laborers,
Livingston County, Illinois, September 1936

Age in years	Total	Elementary			High school		College
		0-4	5-7	8	9-12	More than 12	
16	3	-	1	-	2	-	-
17	5	-	-	1	3	-	1
18	11	-	-	4	7	-	-
19	11	-	1	3	7	-	-
20 - 29	94	2	11	58	21	-	2
30 - 39	50	1	8	32	8	-	1
40 - 49	25	3	9	10	3	-	-
50 - 59	24	1	6	14	3	-	-
60 - 69 ^{/1}	8	3	1	3	1	-	-
Totals	231	10	37	125	55	-	4

^{/1} One worker, reported as a Negro on a laborer schedule in spite of the fact that the operators' schedules report the employment of none but white laborers, has been included in this and subsequent tables without regard to race.

Table 2.- Marital status of 231 agricultural laborers by age,
Livingston County, Illinois, September 1936

Marital status	Total	Age in years					
		10-19	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-69
Unmarried	123	30	61	12	6	12	2
Married	101	-	31	37	19	10	4
Widowed, separated, or divorced	7	-	2	1	-	2	2
Totals	231	30	94	50	25	24	8

Table 3.- Dependents of hired farm laborers, Livingston
County, Illinois, September 1936

Number of dependents	Laborers	
	Number	Percent
0	127	55.0
1	22	9.5
2	24	10.4
3	21	9.1
4	15	6.5
5	8	3.5
6	3	1.3
7 or more	11	4.7
Totals	231	100.0

Farm laborers interviewed in Livingston County had moved about very little. Two-thirds were born in Illinois and over 90 percent considered that State their permanent residence (Table 4). Fifteen of the 20 who gave their residence as other than Illinois had entered the State during 1936, and hence may return to their home States. One unmarried worker employed during the crop season reported that he returned to his home in Missouri each winter. With the exception of the foreign-born, most of those born outside the State came from neighboring States. A few had sought work outside the State but none of those with residence of 6 years or more had done so.

Table 4.- Nativity and residence of 231 white male farm laborers, Livingston County, Illinois, September 1936

State or locality	Nativity		Residence	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Illinois	154	66.6	211	91.3
Kentucky	23	9.9	9	3.9
Indiana	21	9.1	8	3.5
Foreign countries	11	4.8	-	-
Missouri	6	2.6	2	.9
Iowa	3	1.3	-	-
Tennessee	3	1.3	1	.4
Kansas	2	.9	-	-
Virginia	2	.9	-	-
Other States	4	1.7	-	-
Not reported	2	.9	-	-
Totals	231	100.0	231	100.0

Only 14 of the men were employed solely for harvest work. Three had specific jobs - one of them acting as foreman, the others doing machine work and hauling. Eighteen tended livestock. The remainder were general farm laborers, working in the fields or barns, or doing whatever tasks were assigned.

Had the survey occurred a few weeks later, at the height of corn husking, it is probable that more transient laborers would have been found, many of them coming from outside the State. One migrant worker who was interviewed was the operator of a small farm in Kentucky; he had just arrived, having come from there in one of two truck loads of workers who had traveled together. This was his fourth corn-husking season in Livingston County. Dislike for these huskers from the South was frequently expressed: "At the first frost, they fly." Huskers are also drawn from States north of Illinois, chiefly from Wisconsin and Minnesota.

Tenure Experience

The rather high proportion of young, single men represented in this study might suggest that these laborers are just beginning their ascent of the "agricultural ladder." However, it is possible to descend as well as to ascend, and in this group more than one-fourth had already had some experience as farm operators. Most of them had been renters rather than owners or sharecroppers; 57 workers, or 25 percent, had been tenants; and 2 others were still renting (Table 5).

Table 5.- Previous farm operation experience of 231 white male farm laborers, Livingston County, Illinois, September 1936

Experience	Number	Percent
None	165	71.4
Sharecropper	2	.9
Tenant	56	24.2
Owner	5	2.2
Owner and tenant	3	1.3
Totals	231	100.0

Those workers who have at some time been farm operators are generally older than those who have not had this experience. The likelihood that older men have been operators is greater, but the downward change in status may be more serious for them than for the younger men. Slightly less than one-fourth of all those interviewed were over 40 years old, but of those who had been renters or owners one-half were over 40. On the other hand, one-fourth of those who had been renters and were now laborers were under 30 (Table 6).

Table 6.- Comparisons of age distribution of 231 farm laborers by tenure experience, Livingston County, Illinois, September 1936

Age	Sample (231 cases)	With tenure experience (66 cases)	With no tenure experience (165 cases)
	Percent	Percent	Percent
10 - 19	13.0	1.5	17.7
20 - 29	40.7	23.9	47.6
30 - 39	21.6	23.9	20.7
40 - 49	10.8	23.9	5.5
50 - 59	10.4	19.4	6.7
60 - 69	3.5	7.4	1.8
Totals	100.0	100.0	100.0

The reasons most frequently reported for giving up the operator status involved financial difficulties. Some mentioned "drought" or the "low prices" of recent years, but more often the men reported "financial reverses" or "no profits" as causes for changes in the past. No single period predominates for these changes in tenure status. They have been scattered over the last 20 years.

It is not likely that a man past 40 years of age can recoup his finances through agricultural labor and return to the status of a farm operator. As for the younger men who have unsuccessfully tried once, advancement in tenure may lie ahead for them as well as for those who have never been operators. A more careful study of background, management, and financial ability would be necessary to make any predictions regarding either the older or the younger group.

Income

The annual incomes of these agricultural workers showed a wide variation, ranging from \$25 to \$1,131 (Table 7). Up to \$400, the general limit of agricultural earnings, farm work was the prime source of income. Above that, nonagricultural wages and work relief played an important role. A few received direct relief. Three-fifths of the group had earned between \$200 and \$400 during the period September 1, 1935, to September 1, 1936; 17 percent earned less than \$200; and 24 percent reported incomes of more than \$400.

Ninety percent, or \$282, of the average income of \$316 was attributed to agricultural earnings of the laborer. The remainder was added by nonagricultural wages or by other members of his family. However, in only 8 cases did the women and children add to the family income; and only 30, or 14 percent, reported nonagricultural earnings.

The two largest incomes reported were \$672 and \$1,131. The first consisted of \$93 from agricultural earnings and \$579 from work relief; the second, of only \$60 from agricultural labor and the balance from nonagricultural private employment. In most cases, however, nonagricultural work was incidental.

Table 8 shows the number of days employed in agriculture and in other work. Of the 216 workers who reported employment periods, 177 had solely farm work. Only 5 workers reported more days in nonagricultural than in agricultural employment, all averages showing a preponderance of the latter. Among the periods of agricultural employment frequently reported are: 120-149 days, which is about 5 months or short seasonal employment; 180-239 days, 8 and 9 months or full seasonal employment; and full time. Fourteen of the full-time workers were paid for 9 months, but received room and board during the winter. Although they were not receiving cash wages for that time, they could hardly be classed as unemployed.

Table 7.-- Total income, September 1935 - August 1936, of 223 agricultural workers, Livingston County, Illinois

Total income	Number	Percent	Agricultural earnings		Laborers' earnings		Laborers' relief income	
			Reported by laborer	Number	Average	nonagricultural earnings	Work	Direct
			Average	Number	Average	Number	Average	Number
\$ 1 - 49	4	1.8	\$ 33.00	-	-	-	-	-
50 - 99	6	2.7	66.50	-	-	\$ 17.50	-	-
100 - 149	7	3.1	123.71	-	-	-	\$ 30.00	-
150 - 199	21	9.4	165.10	-	-	35.83	-	-
200 - 249	32	14.4	205.44	-	-	137.33	-	-
250 - 299	31	13.9	266.00	-	-	98.67	-	-
300 - 349	36	16.1	303.61	-	-	188.75	-	\$ 38.00
350 - 399	33	14.8	362.73	1	\$100.00	180.00	-	70.00
400 - 449	23	10.3	393.35	1	80.00	112.50	154.00	20.00
450 - 499	14	6.3	405.93	3	67.33	151.00	71.00	60.00
500 - 549	8	3.6	406.50	-	-	133.50	330.00	-
550 and over	8	3.6	301.88	3	165.00	561.33	579.00	81.00
Total and average	223	100.0	\$282.43	8	\$109.62	30	\$155.77	7
						18	\$214.88	\$58.57

[1 One dependent earned \$135.00 in nonagricultural labor which has not been added here.

Table 8.- Days worked in agricultural and nonagricultural employment, September 1, 1935 - September 1, 1936, reported by 216 agricultural laborers, Livingston County, Illinois

		: Agricultural :			
Total days:		work only	:	Mixed employment	
employed :		:	:	Average in	Average in
		Number	:	Number	:
				agricultural	nonagricultural
0 - 29	-	-	-	-	-
30 - 59	3	1	17	35	
60 - 89	1	1	31	50	
90 - 119	5	1	78	34	
120 - 149	16	4	112	16	
150 - 179	9	5	95	71	
180 - 209	13	3	117	72	
210 - 239	21	1	195	10	
240 - 269	3	6	148	112	
270 - 312	106 /1	17	232 /2	61	
Total or average	177	39	150	64	

/1 Fourteen cases reported full-time employment, but received money wages only 9 months.

/2 This average is for 10 cases; 6 others reported a full year's agricultural employment but additional earnings from nonagricultural sources.

Full time was reported by a higher proportion of those with only agricultural work than of those with mixed employment. In fact, the latter group generally lost more working days, and a much larger percentage of them are found in the groups with less employment than is true among those who worked only on farms. How the total amount of employment of all the harvest hands would have compared with that of the laborers interviewed can only be assumed. Probably a much higher percentage of them would have reported mixed employment and fewer days. As far as these schedules are a sample of regular farm hands, only about 50 percent can expect full-time employment.

Assignments on work-relief projects raised the number of days of employment to 180 days or more. In fact, the very high average in nonagricultural employment for those who worked 240-269 days is accounted for by 3 persons, each with an average of 194 days of relief employment.

The occurrence of relief among the more steadily employed and in the higher, rather than in the lower, income ranges is explained by the age and family status of these groups. As a rule, recipients of public aid were older men, whose families were larger than the average. Table 3 indicates 11 cases of families of 8 or more members each; 5 of these 11

depended on direct or work relief for a part of their income. Representing only 5 percent of the entire group interviewed, they accounted for nearly 40 percent of those who received relief. Only 2 single workers received any -- and that in the small amounts of \$30 and \$54.

Generally, laborers in the low-income groups were not eligible for relief because, in most cases, they were not family heads and frequently depended upon their parents or employers to provide housing and board. All those reporting incomes of less than \$100 were under 20 years of age and lived at home; 30 out of the 38 cases with less than \$200 were young men under 30 years of age, only 4 of these 38 reporting dependents.

Certainly these low earnings permit no large savings nor do they allow for advancing one's status. Nevertheless, because of perquisites received, the low cash incomes may indicate a restricted rather than a starvation plane of living. The types of jobs held by those reporting annual incomes between \$100 and \$200 generally provided room and board in addition to wages. On steady jobs supplying room and board, such as those held by 9 of these low-income workers, this income permitted in addition a few dollars a month for clothing and other needs. Another third of the 28 whose incomes were between \$100 and \$200 held several successive jobs, but had nearly full-time work, each job supplying room and board. The remaining schedules of those with intermittent employment do not reveal sources of livelihood other than cash earnings or savings.

Relatively few workers had any appreciable amount of property or savings. Frequently they reported automobiles. Although most of the workers lived on or near the farms on which they worked, 165, or 71 percent, owned cars "in running condition." Only 13 had any real estate. Of these, 9 owned farm land averaging 81 acres each, and 4 owned homes. Thirty-four had savings in the form of bank accounts averaging \$430, and 91 carried life insurance policies averaging \$1,366.

Wage Rates

In Livingston County, seasonal or permanent hired laborers are most frequently paid by the month, whereas harvest hands are usually paid by the day or piece. Three-fourths of the group interviewed were paid by the month, one-tenth by the day, one-tenth by the piece, and the remainder by other methods. Operators' reports show a similar distribution with a predominance of monthly payments at the time the survey was taken.

Although different types of labor are paid on different bases, all work long hours and 6 days a week, and chores must be done 7 days a week. Of those interviewed 80 percent worked 10 or more hours for the normal day's tasks, 2 reporting as many as 14 hours per day. There was, however, no relation between the length of the working day and the wage rate.

The average rate of pay without regard to perquisites was \$31.04 per month or \$1.65 per day as reported by the laborers themselves; \$30.82 or \$1.59 respectively were reported by the operators (Tables 9 and 10). Farm laborers in Livingston County usually receive a part of their wages in kind. Evaluation of these perquisites is difficult and rates of pay

Table 9.- Monthly wage rates of hired farm laborers,
Livingston County, Illinois, 1936

Wage rate :	As reported by farm operator /1				As reported by farm laborer /2				Percent reporting specified rate	
	:Without:		:With :		:Without:		:With :		Farm	
	Total:		board :		Total/3		board :		operator:	
	board :		house:		house:		house:		laborer	
\$10.00	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	.6	
17.50	1	-	1	-	1	1	-	.5	.6	
18.00	1	-	1	-	1	1	-	.5	.6	
20.00	14	-	14	-	12 /4	12	1	7.7	6.7	
22.50	1	-	1	-	1	1	-	.5	.6	
25.00	28	-	24	4	23	21	3	15.3	12.9	
26.00	2	-	1	1	2	1	1	1.1	1.1	
27.00	1	-	1	-	1	1	-	.5	.6	
27.50	3	-	3	-	3	3	-	1.7	1.7	
28.00	3	-	3	-	3	3	-	1.7	1.7	
28.70	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	.5	-	
30.00	59	3	42	14	59	39	23	32.3	33.3	
31.25	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	.5	-	
32.00	3	-	-	3	3	-	3	1.7	1.7	
32.50	3	-	1	2	3 /5	1	2	1.7	1.7	
35.00	37	3	14	20	42	13	30	20.3	23.7	
37.50	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	.5	-	
39.00	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	.5	-	
40.00	16	-	5	11	14	4	12	8.8	7.9	
42.00	1	-	-	1	1	-	1	.5	.6	
45.00	5	-	2	3	5	2	3	2.7	2.8	
50.00	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	-	.6	
55.00	1	-	1	-	1	1	-	.5	.6	
Totals	183	7	114	62	177	105	80	100.0	100.0	
Averages	\$30.82		\$28.82		\$31.04		\$34.11			
		\$32.32		\$34.34		\$28.71				

/1 Operators' reports give the average wage rates being paid by the operator at the time of visit.

/2 Reports of farm laborers give wage rates received for specific jobs.

/3 No laborer reported a monthly wage rate without either board or a house.

/4 Totals in this column are not necessarily the sum of the figures in the other two columns, for a laborer may receive both house and board.

/5 Includes 1 at \$32.30 instead of \$32.50.

apparently are not governed by the value of these items. It is impossible to make comparisons as there were too few workers receiving no board in addition to cash wages. The average monthly rate with board was reported by 105 laborers and 114 operators as \$28.71 and \$28.82 respectively. For those who were furnished a dwelling, the average rate was higher than for those receiving board. Apparently, the better workers received better pay as well as more valuable perquisites.

Table 10.- Day wage rates paid and perquisites furnished agricultural workers, Livingston County, Illinois

Rate per day	Operators' reports /1			Laborers' reports /2		
	Perquisites			Perquisites		
	Total	With board	Without board	Total	With board	Without board
\$0.50	1	1	-	-	-	-
1.00	6	6	-	3	3	-
1.25	1	1	-	2	1	1
1.35	1	1	-	-	-	-
1.50	13	10	3	8	5	3
1.75	3	3	-	2	1	1
2.00	10	8	2	6	5	1
2.50	2	1	1	2	1	1
Totals	37	31	6	23	16	7
Averages	\$1.59	\$1.54	\$1.83	\$1.65	\$1.63	\$1.71

/1 Operators' reports deal with average wage rates being paid by the operators at time of visit.

/2 Laborers' reports concern the specific jobs at which the laborers were working at the time of the interview either in September or October 1936.

Nearly every worker who was furnished a house was also provided with varying quantities of foodstuffs or the means of raising them. Provisions received consisted primarily of milk or pork, 62 laborers reporting an average of 8 pounds of the latter per week. Eighty-six workers received garden space, the most recurrent item reported among these miscellaneous perquisites. Not infrequently animals owned by a laborer were kept at the employer's expense.

Average wage rates do not indicate the large extent to which many of the laborers are actually paid at the same figure. Though the total range of monthly wages ran from \$10 to \$55, over 95 percent of the operators' and 94 percent of the laborers' reports mentioned \$20 to \$40. More than 50 percent of the laborers received either \$30 or \$35 per month (Table 9).

Though fewer laborers were paid by the day, their wages also show a wide variation and the same tendency to repeat a few specific figures; \$1.50 and \$2.00 were the most common rates (Table 10).

Corn husking is the chief piecework job, but one truck farm reported piecework rates for picking cucumbers, tomatoes, and beans. Rates and earnings for picking corn vary, but they are noticeably higher than the one report for harvesting vegetables. The usual earnings in husking corn are \$3 and \$4 per day (Table 11) and rates are generally set on ability to meet these earnings. Customary usage plays a large part in the setting of corn-husking rates; in fact it is not uncommon for a laborer to accept a job before the rate is set, the verbal contract calling for "whatever they seem to be paying." Earnings in the 1935 season at the same rates were slightly higher than in 1936 because of differences in harvesting conditions. In both years the persons receiving the higher rates reported larger average daily earnings.

Table 11.- Piecework rates, husking corn, Livingston County, Illinois

:Operators' reports /1:			Laborers' reports /2			
Cents : 1936			September-October		September-November	
per	:	Average	1936		1935	
bushel:	Number	: earnings	Number	: Average	Number	: Average
	: reporting	: per day	: reporting	: earnings	: reporting	: earnings
3	1	\$2.80	-	-	2	\$2.75
4	16	3.37	10	\$3.21	39	3.36
5	17	4.87	10	4.07	4	4.90
6	2	6.00	1	/3	-	-
Totals	36	4.21	21	3.64	45	3.47

/1 Operators' reports refer to rates being paid at time of interview.

/2 Laborers' reports refer to specific jobs.

/3 Not reported.

Comparison of the wage rates for Livingston County as determined by this survey with those for the State of Illinois as gathered by the U. S. Department of Agriculture indicates a rather close agreement (Table 12). Relatively small differences were found in the rates with board, but too few of those without board were found in this survey to permit valid comparisons. The Crop Reporting Board of the U. S. Department of Agriculture reported \$28.50 per month or \$1.50 per day, both with board, as the rate in Illinois on October 1, 1936. The farm operators of Livingston County reported averages of \$28.82 and \$1.54 respectively, the laborers reporting averages of \$28.71 and \$1.63.

Tenure of Employment

Because of the character of the industry, instability marks the tenure of agricultural employment. Even in this relatively stable type of farming (dominated by the family-size farm) great fluctuations occur in employment. Many operators report the employment of occasional labor only -- for plowing, planting, or threshing of oats, or husking of corn. On grain farms, the predominant type in this county, the average number of laborers per farm reporting was 1.76 at the busiest season; 1.09 at the time of visit, September - October 1936; but only 0.35 at the slackest season. The number of employees at this slack time is only 20 percent of those employed at the peak. The time of plowing in the spring and of the non-mechanized harvesting of corn in the fall are the busiest seasons for labor.

Table 12.- Average wage rates as reported for Illinois and for Livingston County, Illinois, October, 1936

Source	Per month		Per day	
	:	:	:	:
	: With board	: Without board	: With board	: Without board
Federal Crop Reporting Service/ <u>1</u>	\$28.50	\$37.75	\$1.50	\$1.95
By farm operators/ <u>2</u>	28.82	32.32/ <u>4</u>	1.54	1.83/ <u>6</u>
By farm laborers/ <u>3</u>	28.71	- <u>5</u>	1.63	1.71/ <u>4</u>

1 Federal Crop Reporting Service figures are based on reports of farm operators who regularly report labor among other items. This line represents the Illinois average.

2 Farm operators interviewed in Livingston County, September - October, 1936.

3 Farm laborers interviewed in Livingston County, September - October, 1936.

4 Seven reports.

5 No reports.

6 Six reports.

The length of time a job lasts depends in part upon the month in which it was obtained (Table 13). Over one-half of all the jobs were obtained in March. Though 44 workers had found employment in September or October, 1936, only 6 who had been employed in the same months in 1935 continued on the same job throughout the year. According to the operators' reports, seasonal laborers get from 30 to 38 weeks of work while harvest hands get 4 to 8 weeks. Only the permanent hand can expect winter employment.

The average length of employment of those interviewed was 30 months, over 40 percent having obtained their present jobs before January 1936. These long periods on the same job emphasize the stability of the sample group. Relatively few were harvest hands, some were seasonal laborers, but many were permanent hands.

Table 13.- Month and year 230 present farm jobs began,
Livingston County, Illinois

Month	:	:	Year											
	Total	:	1930	:										
	:	:	or before	:	1931	:	1932	:	1933	:	1934	:	1935	:
January	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	3					
February	4	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	2					
March	131	21	6	6	9	10	21	58						
April	7	-	-	-	-	1	3	3						
May	9	-	-	1	-	-	2	6						
June	3	-	-	-	-	-	1	2						
July	6	1	-	-	-	-	-	5						
August	6	-	-	-	-	-	-	6						
September	27	1	-	-	1	1	2	22						
October	29	-	-	-	2	1	4	22						
November	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-						
December	3	-	1	1	-	-	1	-						
Totals	230	/1	26	/1	7	8	12	13	35	129				

1 Includes 1 not reported by month.

The general method used in both obtaining jobs and hiring laborers was direct contact between the prospective employee and employer. Seldom was a third party used although a few had found their jobs or secured employees through acquaintances; one operator reported that he answered advertisements. Neither group reported the use of any public or private employment agency (Table 14).

Table 14.- Methods of placement of farm laborers,
Livingston County, Illinois

Method	Laborers' reports				Operators' reports	
	Monthly wage rate		Daily wage rate			
	Number	Percent/1	Number	Percent/1	Number	Percent/2
Laborers' search	88	49.7	7	30.4	88	39.8
Operators' search	63	35.6	15	65.2	112	50.7
Other	26	14.7	1	4.4	9	4.1

/1 Percent of jobs secured by the given method.

/2 Percent of 221 employers using that method. As each employer may report more than one method, this column does not necessarily total 100 percent.

Community Participation

It is difficult to ascertain the extent of the laborers' participation in community life. None of those interviewed reported membership within the last 5 years in any labor union or farmers' organization. Social contact came through more loosely knit ties such as informal community activities (Table 15). Most of the workers took part in such casual pastimes as shopping and the movies, but very few attended farm institutes or farm-practice demonstrations. During the preceding 12 months, 85 percent had been present at community entertainments; three-fourths had attended an average of 27 religious services. The frequency of attendance at church was exceeded only by the large number of shopping trips.

Table 15.- Informal community activity of 231 hired farm laborers,
Livingston County, Illinois, September 1935 - September 1936

Activity	Number	Percent	Average times reported
Shopping	230	99.6	42.3
Community entertainment	196	84.8	13.9
Religious services	176	76.2	27.3
Movies	157	68.0	21.8
Circus	139	60.2	2.2
Overnight visits to friends or relatives	131	56.7	4.8
Ball games	104	45.0	8.8
Farm demonstrations	43	18.6	4.0
Fishing	10	4.3	3.6
Farmers' institutes	9	3.9	1.8

In Livingston County a relatively immobile group of hired farm laborers was interviewed. Since the more mobile group of harvest hands had, in most instances, been laid off after threshing or were just arriving for husking, these data apply primarily to the more permanent employees. Further research would be necessary to secure data for the seasonal workers of this county.

The laborers included in this study were a part of the community in which they lived, not markedly segregated socially or economically though advancement in either line was not indicated by the information obtained. Many were employed the year round on the same place, others worked during the full 9 months which represent the growing and harvesting seasons. Although a resident group, they did not participate through organizations in the formal management of community affairs, but they did take part in the social and informal community life.

It is difficult to ascertain the extent of the laborer's participation in community life. Many of the laborers reported that they did not take part in community affairs, but some reported that they did. The laborers who reported that they did take part in community affairs were more likely to be employed year round than those who reported that they did not take part in community affairs. The laborers who reported that they did take part in community affairs were more likely to be employed on the same place for a longer period of time than those who reported that they did not take part in community affairs.

Table 10 - Informal community activities of the hired farm laborers, Livingston County, Illinois, September 1935 - September 1936

Activity	Number	Percent
Religious	103	50.5
Community organizations	103	50.5
Political organizations	103	50.5
Welfare	103	50.5
Other	103	50.5
Unemployed	103	50.5
Retired	103	50.5
Other	103	50.5
Unemployed	103	50.5
Retired	103	50.5
Other	103	50.5
Unemployed	103	50.5
Retired	103	50.5
Other	103	50.5

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